

CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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Sierra Fire Survivors to Tell Their Stories at CDF Event Wildfire Awareness Week - May 5-11, 2003

SACRAMENTO – Last summer the Sierra Fire ripped through the foothills east of Sacramento so quickly residents barely had enough time to get into their cars and leave! Mrs. Pat Kile had lived in the area for 35 years. She kept her property clear of fire hazards because she lived in fear of what would happen that day. Many of her neighbors had to run with only the belongings that they could carry, not knowing what would be waiting for them when they returned. The Sierra Fire scorched 540 acres and destroyed 5 houses. Mrs. Kile and several other survivors of the Sierra Fire will tell their stories and show reporters what happened to their property as they join CDF firefighters to kick off Wildfire Awareness Week. **In addition to homeowner testimonials, we will demonstrate on-the-ground firefighting while a CDF helicopter makes water drops. And, our fire safety dogs will demonstrate for children how to get out of a burning building.**

Governor Davis has officially proclaimed May 5-11 Wildfire Awareness Week 2003 in California. CDF will begin the week with a media event at our Auburn Headquarters. This year's theme is "Defensible Space is Your Responsibility". Among our speakers will be homeowners who have personal reasons to take that message to heart. **After the news conference, media crews may visit properties that burned and properties that survived last year's Sierra Fire in Placer County.** These properties provide testimony that fire safety techniques work! Also as part of this year's kick-off event, CDF will debut its newly revised Fire Safety Education website emphasizing wildland homeowner responsibility. The 11-year-old daughter of a CDF Fire Captain will show us how to navigate the site. She is also a CDF Volunteer in Prevention.

What: Wildfire Awareness Week Media Event

Where: CDF Auburn HQ - Highway 80 at the Bowman Exit

When: Monday May 5, 2003 at 10 a.m.

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This year's theme, "Defensible Space Is Your Responsibility," highlights the homeowner's role in helping themselves and their property survive a wildfire plus giving firefighters a safe area to protect their home. The most important step a homeowner can take is to clear all dry grass and brush 30 to 100 feet around every structure on the property. If homeowners create "defensible space" and encourage others in their community to take the same steps, they can help prevent loss when wildfire strikes – and even save a firefighter's life.

The Auburn event is just one of many scheduled to take place around the state as CDF units will be reaching out to their communities to educate residents about preparing for fire season. At these preparedness exercises CDF firefighters will showcase the tools and capabilities needed to battle wildfire. Also, local Fire Safe Councils will highlight key projects that prevent loss from wildfire and explain how everyone can get involved.

"Wildfire Awareness Week is designed to remind Californians that we each have the ability to make our homes fire safe," says CDF Director Andrea Tuttle. "Things you do today can help your home survive tomorrow. Let us show you how."

CDF firefighters encourage Californians to take a few simple steps to reduce the threat of wildfire around their homes. These include: 1) Clearing dry grass, weeds and brush at least 30 feet away from every structure; 2) removing leaves and needles from roofs and gutters; 3) trimming tree branches at least 10 feet from roofs and chimneys; 4) clearly marking all emergency water sources; 5) locating wood piles away from the house, wood fence and propane tanks.

A complete homeowner checklist and additional fire preparedness information is available on the CDF Web site at www.fire.ca.gov.

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